

# The Christian News-Letter

Edited by  
J. H. OLDHAM

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DEAR MEMBER,

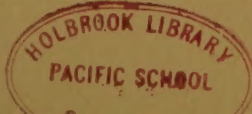
President Roosevelt's proposal to lend weapons to the democracies to be repaid in kind or in other goods was re-affirmed in his address to Congress as a definite recommendation and has been rightly hailed as establishing an important precedent. It embodies in a striking manner the lesson of the war, which is compelling us to think in terms of real resources of man-power and goods and to regard finance and money as a means to an end and as one instrument among others. It throws into relief the difference between a loan which represents a debt and one which represents an asset; when a loan enriches the borrower, he can share his gain with the lender, but when, as in war, the borrowed money is spent on unproductive purposes, interest charges become a permanent burden. The President's proposal lifts the supply of arms out of the sphere of purely commercial transactions into that of vital national interests. It removes, so far as it goes, the nightmare of vast, unpayable war debts, which become a disturbing factor in peace-time trade relations.

A final judgment on the proposal must be reserved until it takes legislative form and the details are known. It creates a problem for America, which will no doubt be actively debated, by imposing on her the burden of storing immense quantities of munitions or other goods, for which there may be no immediate use. The President's reference to repayment in other goods than munitions raises questions which will call for much examination. The suggestion in some quarters that the proposal eliminates the payment of interest is an exaggeration. There has been as yet no positive statement that there will be no interest charge, and it would be possible for interest payments to be made in goods; moreover, even if there is no interest on international transactions, the American Government will have to borrow money to produce the goods and this country will doubtless finance the replacement of damaged goods by interest-bearing loans from its citizens. The principle has to do, moreover, with a very exceptional case; it could hardly be applied, for example, to British purchases of American wheat or raw cotton. But when all this has been taken into account the President's action is a move in the direction of economic sanity, the consequences of which may be very far-reaching.

## "THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT"

An account of the aims of a new society formed a few months ago by Roman Catholics and called "The Sword of the Spirit"<sup>1</sup> is given in an article by Mr. Christopher Dawson in the January number of the *Dublin Review*. Attempts by the State to set itself in the place of God are, he points out, as old as history. But in the past the power of the State was limited by the means at its disposal; the new thing is that today its power is unlimited. Through the immense machinery of party, police and propaganda and the new techniques provided by psychology and technical inventions the modern totalitarian state is able to control not only men's lives, property and work but their family, leisure and thought.

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. Secretary is Miss Barbara Ward and the address 11, Cavendish Square, London, W.1.





By an unceasing process of repression and stimulation, of suggestion and terrorisation, a systematic assault is made on the citadel of the personality, and men's ways of thinking and feeling are conditioned without their being aware of it. In these circumstances there can be no place for religion unless it forfeits its spiritual freedom and becomes the tool of the State. This would be the sin against the Holy Ghost in the most absolute sense. The Church must, therefore, take up its prophetic office and bear witness to the Word, even if it means the judgment of the nations and open war with the powers of the world. Every world crisis is, as the word denotes, a judgment and a decision out of which something new must come. It is an opportunity to hear the Word of God and for the Spirit to manifest its creative power to humanity.

The purpose of the movement of the Sword of the Spirit is to provide channels for these divine forces. What we have to work and pray for is not an alliance with the temporal power, as in the old Christendom, and an external conformity to Christian standards, but a *reordering of all the elements of human life and civilisation by the power of the Spirit*; the birth of a true community which is neither an inorganic mass of individuals nor a mechanised organisation of power but a living spiritual order.

### THE SUPPLEMENT

This week's Supplement contains two documents of exceptional interest as illustrating movements of Christian thought in other countries. The American statement is marked by a deep sympathy with human suffering, strong attachment to truth and a desire to see things as they really are. The signatories are nearly all leaders in the Church life of America or in education.

It was announced last week that in response to a personal request by President Roosevelt the British Government had agreed to allow limited supplies of vitamin concentrates, condensed milk and babies' clothing from America to enter unoccupied France.

The Swiss document raises in the clearest possible terms the fundamental issues of the war as they concern the Christian conscience.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Oldham

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## CHRISTIANS IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND THE WAR

### I. "AMERICAN CHRISTIANS AND THE FEEDING PROPOSALS"

"The American people are confronted by a dilemma of heart-searching difficulty. By Mr. Hoover and others, they are urged to bring pressure upon the Government of Great Britain to permit the passage through her blockade of ships bearing food for civilian populations in Belgium, Holland, Norway, Finland and Poland who may face acute privations, if not starvation, in the coming winter. On the other hand, they are warned by eminent fellow-citizens, including trusted leaders of the Christian Churches, that the adoption of Mr. Hoover's proposal in its present form might strengthen Germany in her campaign of conquest, and indirectly prolong the enslavement of these very people whom it is proposed to relieve. This dilemma bears with peculiar poignancy upon those with Christian consciences.

"We wish to make our own position unmistakably clear. Our hearts go out in compassion to the innocent and brave peoples of these nations who, having already passed through the agony of invasion, conquest and despoilment, to-day endure a merciless subjugation and to-morrow may face the further threat of hunger in the coming winter. If there is any plan by which their distress can be relieved without prolonging their subjugation through strengthening their conquerors, we believe all humane Americans

will join in the desire to further such a plan. We earnestly hope that a way may be found.

"Unfortunately the only plan now offered to the American people is that of Mr. Hoover. We wish to pay tribute to his profound sincerity and his tireless services in behalf of humanity. However, after careful examination of Mr. Hoover's present proposal, we are constrained to indicate the misgivings which prevent us from giving it our support:

1. The proposal as it is now being urged upon the American people makes no recognition of the basic fact in the whole matter. If hunger threatens people in the conquered countries, this is not to be attributed in the first instance to the British blockade, but to the despoilment of their lands, the expropriation of their food supplies and the wholesale dislocation of their populations by the invaders. We are informed by the highest authorities that the Continent of Europe, while suffering a reduction in normal food supplies, contains adequate food to fend the danger of starvation from all its populations. The problem is not primarily one of supply but of distribution. Germany could, if she would, assure that all of the peoples of the Continent would be fed this winter. As their conqueror and ruler, it is her duty to do so. If the British are asked to permit the passage of



additional foodstuffs to these peoples, it would be to discharge a task which is the obligation of Germany and which the latter is able to meet. By so much, it would relieve Germany of this responsibility, release her from the danger of revolt among the conquered peoples and thus strengthen her for further conquests. There is no way in which food can be sent without material comfort and aid to the aggressors. These facts must be frankly admitted.

2. Mr. Hoover's pronouncement is gravely inaccurate in statements of fact. For example, it declares that, unless its proposals prevail, fifteen million people will die in the coming winter. We know of no responsible estimate which places those endangered at more than a fraction of that figure. Similar exaggeration characterises the presentation of the problem at many points.

3. According to the proposal, the scheme would become operative only *after* the return by Germany of all supplies already withdrawn from the countries which are to be aided. We must frankly indicate our misgivings as to the practicability of such a proposal. Many will question whether such an undertaking by the German Government could be trusted and whether, if given, the fulfillment of its items could be verified. In any event, until the necessary guarantees have been given by Germany, and Great Britain is satisfied as to their fulfillment, it is obviously inappropriate to press Great Britain for the relaxation of her blockade or to seek to arouse American sentiment for that purpose.

4. The plan proposes no contribution of money or food or ships by the American people. This feature will hardly commend it to Christians since it offers our people no opportunity for generosity or sacrifice on behalf of the sufferers. Indeed, our only participation would be through the pressure of American public opinion upon a foreign but friendly

Government which Americans recognise as the chief protector of liberties which they prize.

5. The relationship of this problem to the principles of national policy must be considered. Slowly but surely the American people have been driven to recognize that their own security is intimately involved in the success of Great Britain's heroic defense. They are unwilling to take any action which would compromise that defense. Therefore, the judgment as to whether any scheme of food relief would seriously weaken that defense can, in the last analysis, be given only by the British Government. We must protest the repeated implication in Mr. Hoover's declaration that British hesitancy is due to heartless cruelty. The British people and their Government are not less humane than in the last War when they not only permitted passage of food for Mr. Hoover's relief work in Belgium but contributed substantial sums to it. They are not less reluctant now than then to risk antagonizing humane sentiment elsewhere in the world. We believe that, if they can discover a way in which relief can be sent without jeopardizing the outcome of the main struggle, they will approve it. We believe the American people should and will trust the final decision to their greater knowledge of all the facts. We support the view of the fifteen national leaders who have declared that "unless the British Government gives its free consent, uncoerced by any external pressure, it is our reluctant but considered judgment that the American people should have no part in the scheme."

6. What is at stake, however, is not merely the security of Great Britain and the United States, but also the sole remaining hope of freedom for these subjugated nations. *For their sakes and the sake of their children*, no course can be risked which might imperil the only bulwark which still stands between them in



their present need and the far greater threat of indefinite servitude.

7. Finally, since these matters vitally affect the interests of the United States as well as of the belligerents, the propriety of negotiations by private individuals or organizations must be questioned. The proper channel for negotiation and action would appear to be the American Government or some agency officially recognized by our Government for that purpose.

"Until the misgivings outlined above are set at rest and the steps suggested are taken, we are compelled to withhold support from the proposal and to urge the peoples of our churches to do likewise. In the meantime, it is our hope that the recognized representatives of American Protestantism, acting possibly through the Federal Council of Churches, will explore every possibility of assistance to the stricken peoples of Europe and will advise American Christians as to ways in which they can help—ways which will strengthen resistance to tyranny and further

the restoration of subject peoples to freedom and peace."

(Signed) Harrison Ray Anderson; Henry A. Atkinson; Ernest M. Best; James A. Blaisdell; Henry Evertson Cobb; Boyd Edwards; Orien W. Fifer; Frank Porter Graham; Frederick R. Griffin; Leon Grochowski; Ernest Graham Guthrie; Frederick B. Harris; Paul Silas Heath; Charles H. Heimsath; Henry W. Hobson; Douglas Horton; Lynn Harold Hough; Thomas Jesse Jones; Albert C. Knudson; William Lawrence; John A. MacCallum; Charles S. MacFarland; John A. Mackay; Clyde McGee; William Pierson Merrill; William A. Neilson; Joseph Fort Newton; Reinhold Niebuhr; Justin Wroe Nixon; G. Ashton Oldham; G. Bromley Oxnam; Herman Page; Edward L. Parsons; Endicott Peabody; George W. Richards; Howard Chandler Robbins; Charles Seymour; Minot Simons; George Stewart; John Timothy Stone; Henry P. Van Dusen; Von Ogden Vogt.

## II. ADDRESS BY SWISS CITIZENS TO THE SWISS CHURCHES

"To the Council of the Swiss Evangelical Association of Churches"

"Mr. President and Gentlemen,

"The signatories to this letter are Swiss citizens belonging to different spiritual and political camps who have been drawn together by a common concern for the freedom, honour and independence of the Swiss Federation. In their attitude also to the existing Churches in Switzerland they are in agreement only in so far as they all see clearly the historical significance of these Churches for the birth and growth of the Swiss nation and also their function and task in the public life of to-day. With these presuppositions they venture to submit to you, as representing the governing bodies of the Evangelical Reformed Churches, the following statement:

"The Swiss Federation is facing after the events of the past summer, as it did before they took place, the possibility of the

gravest threat to its existence, and consequently to all that it represents among the other European nations both as characterising its own life and as embodying what is of universal human value.

"The present political and military situation in Europe forces us to recognise that we may at any moment be faced with the decision—*either* to give way before external demands, compliance with which would mean that Switzerland would cease for all time to be what she is and ought to be, *or* to meet these demands with military resistance, in which we should have to rely in the main on ourselves, and the form of which (i.e. the defence of our Alpine region) would require both from our army and from our civilian population an almost incredible readiness for discipline, self-sacrifice and endurance.

"Can we and will we renounce what as Swiss up till now for better or worse we have been and have cherished, in order to



accommodate ourselves to a way of life which is alien and contrary not only to our own, but to all that we have been taught by our forefathers to regard as right and good for man?

"If not, can we and will we affirm the conviction that it is worth while, that it is incumbent on us and that in the last resort it is wise, even from the political, economic and military point of view, to avert this danger by fulfilling our well-known and often acknowledged duty to defend our land and making every sacrifice that its fulfilment demands from us?

"Mr. President and Gentlemen, these questions are of so radical a nature that it is clear to us that the necessary emphatic negative to the first question and the necessary emphatic affirmative to the second will require from our people, and from every individual among us, a faith that far exceeds the ordinary measure of patriotism and idealism. It is plain to us that in the last resort it is the Christian faith, from which our Federation took its origin, that will be needed to sustain us in the hour of a decision fraught with so much danger in both directions. It is because the Christian Churches are responsible for preaching the Christian faith in our land that we venture to press upon your attention afresh this state of affairs, which certainly cannot have escaped your notice.

"We would like indeed to go further, and to suggest that the questions that have been raised cannot be a matter of indifference to the Christian Churches as such, (that is to say, in relation to their own distinctive spiritual task outside the sphere of world politics) in so far as the decision for or against the freedom, honour and independence of the Swiss people is necessarily, in the present situation, at the same time a decision for or against all that Christianity up till now, however imperfectly, has maintained as divinely and humanly commanded and as just and right. Of this too you must be aware, but none the less we would like to remind you of it.

"On these grounds we allow ourselves to express the confidence and hope that the Swiss Churches are alive to the danger which threatens our people and land and to the greatness and far-reaching nature of the decision which we may all suddenly be called upon to make, and that they are ready to take on themselves the responsibility which at this time belongs especially to them; that is to say, to make the contribution which for the reasons stated they alone can make, and which they have a special call to make, to preparing the minds of the people to meet the threatened crisis and to creating and maintaining both in the army and among the civilian population the understanding, temper and attitude that are indispensable.

"We do not mean that the Churches should leave their proper sphere of Christian preaching, teaching and pastoral work to occupy themselves with patriotic propaganda. What we desire is much more that, while remaining strictly within their own sphere, the Churches should keep clearly in view the peculiar danger and task which today confront us as Swiss people, and that in their own sphere and with the means appropriate to them they should not fail to exert themselves to save us from the moral collapse, which was the real cause of catastrophe in other countries, and to enable the Swiss people in a decisive hour to avail themselves of their Christian heritage.

"We are sending a copy of this letter to all the cantonal Church and synodical Councils, as well as to the Evangelical press service, and we should be grateful if you would transmit its contents (in the form either of the full text or of an independent communication) to the local Church councils or pastors."

[The signatories to this letter, numbering about thirty, include several members of the Swiss Federal Parliament, the leader of the Conservative Party in Basle, the Mayor of Zürich (Socialist) and the editor of the *Basler Nachrichten*.]